

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

(currently amended)

5 1. A seal assembly for sealing a toner passage in a toner hopper used in an image forming apparatus, said seal assembly comprising:

a main body portion, said main body portion including a first layer defining a first opening,

10 an adherent layer including a second opening in register with said first opening of said first layer, said adherent layer having a first surface and a second surface, said second surface of adherent layer is adjacent said first layer and said first surface of said adherent layer further including at least one masking region, ~~whereby~~ wherein said at least one masking region is covered by at least one kiss-cut release liner; and

15 a tear-able layer wherein said tear-able layer is adhered to said first surface of said adherent layer except where said at least one masking region is covered by said kiss-cut release liner, thereby said at least one kiss-cut release liner is covered by said tear-able layer; and

a pull-strip is connected to said tear-able layer.

(original)

20 2. A seal assembly as in claim 1 wherein said adherent layer comprises an adhesive material.

(currently amended)

25 3. A seal assembly as in claim 1 wherein said adherent layer comprises a tape material ~~whereby~~ wherein said tape material includes adhesive on two opposite surfaces.

(original)

4. A seal assembly as in claim 3 wherein said tape material includes a carrier in between two layers of glue or adhesive.

(original)

5. A seal assembly as in claim 1 wherein said adherent layer comprises a glue material.

(currently amended)

5     56. A seal assembly as in claim 1 wherein said at least one kiss-cut is a precision cut that cuts fully through said kiss-cut release liner layer but not fully through said seal assembly.

(currently amended)

10     7. A seal assembly as in claim 1 ~~whereby~~ wherein said pull-strip comprises a strip of tear-able material which is unitary with said ~~layer of~~ tear-able layer material.

(currently amended)

8. A seal assembly as in claim 1 ~~whereby~~ wherein said pull-strip comprises a tear-guide.

15     (currently amended)

9. A seal assembly as in claim 1 wherein a connecting region is formed in the vicinity where said pull-strip connects to said tear-able layer; and

20     ~~whereby~~ wherein a first pre-cut and a second pre-cut are proximately located in said connecting region or adjacent said connecting region, said first and second pre-cuts determining a location of an initial tear of said tear-able layer in said main body portion.

(currently amended)

10. A seal assembly as in claim 1

25     wherein said first layer has a first surface and a second surface wherein said first surface of said first layer is adjacent said second surface of said adherent layer, and

wherein said kiss-cut release liner is a portion of a first release liner layer; and

30     wherein said kiss-cut release liner covers said at least one masking region and the

remainder of said first release liner layer is discarded so that said tear-able layer can adhere to said first surface of said adherent layer; and

wherein a tape layer has a first surface and a second surface, and

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~~whereby~~ wherein ~~[[a]]~~ said first surface of said tape layer is located on ~~[[a]]~~ said second surface of said first layer and a second release liner layer is attached to said second surface of said ~~tear-able~~ tape layer to protect said tape layer prior to installing said seal assembly and ~~which~~ wherein said second release liner layer

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is removed prior to installing said seal assembly.

(currently amended)

11. A seal assembly as in claim 1 ~~whereby~~ wherein said kiss-cut release liner includes  
a

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~~masking portion of said layer of said kiss-cut release liner includes~~ consisting of more than one discrete region on said kiss-cut release liner wherein each said discrete region on said kiss-cut release liner covers said at least one masking region.

(currently amended)

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12. A seal assembly as in claim 1 ~~whereby~~ wherein said kiss-cut release liner includes  
at least one

~~non-masking portion of said layer of said kiss-cut release liner includes~~ consisting of more than one discrete region on said kiss-cut release liner wherein each said discrete region on said kiss-cut release liner covers said at least one non-masking portion.

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(currently amended)

13. A seal assembly as in claim 1 ~~whereby~~ wherein said tear-able layer is conductive.

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(currently amended)

14. A seal assembly as in claim 1 ~~whereby~~ wherein said pull-strip ~~layer~~ is conductive.

(currently amended)

15. A toner hopper used in an image forming apparatus;

~~whereby~~ wherein said toner hopper includes a reservoir and a feed roller compartment; and

5           ~~whereby~~ wherein said reservoir is used to store powdered toner; and

~~whereby~~ wherein said feed roller compartment includes a roller used to dispense toner; and

~~whereby~~ wherein said toner hopper includes a seal assembly between said reservoir and said feed roller compartment;

10           said seal assembly comprising:

          a main body portion, said main body portion including a first layer defining a first opening,

15           an adherent layer including a second opening in register with said first opening of said first layer, said adherent layer having a first surface and a second surface, said second surface of said adherent layer is adjacent said first layer and said first surface of said adherent layer further including at least one masking region, ~~whereby~~ wherein said at least one masking region is covered by a kiss-cut release liner; and

20           a tear-able layer wherein said tear-able layer is adhered to said first surface of said adherent layer except where said at least one masking region is covered by said kiss-cut release liner, thereby said kiss-cut release liner is covered by said tear-able layer; and

          a pull-strip is connected to said tear-able layer.

(currently amended)

25           16. A toner cartridge assembly used in an image forming apparatus;

~~whereby~~ wherein said toner cartridge assembly includes of a toner hopper and a waste toner hopper; and

30           ~~whereby~~ wherein said waste toner hopper includes of a photoreceptor, a cleaning blade, a charging device for electrostatically charging said photoreceptor and a container to receive waste toner; and

~~whereby~~ wherein said toner hopper includes a reservoir and a feed roller compartment; and

~~whereby~~ wherein said reservoir is used to store powdered toner; and

~~whereby~~ wherein said feed roller compartment has a roller used to dispense toner; and  
~~whereby~~ wherein said toner hopper [includes] comprises a seal assembly; and  
said seal assembly comprising:

5           a main body portion, said main body portion including a first layer defining a first opening,

          an adherent layer including a second opening in register with said first opening of said first layer, said adherent layer having a first surface and a second surface, said second surface of said adherent layer is adjacent said first layer and said first surface of said  
10       adherent layer further including at least one masking region, ~~whereby~~ wherein said at least one masking region is covered by a kiss-cut release liner; and

          a tear-able layer wherein said tear-able layer is adhered to said first surface of said adherent layer except where said at least one masking region is covered by said kiss-cut release liner, thereby said kiss-cut release liner is covered by said tear-able layer; and

15           a pull-strip is connected to said tear-able layer.

(original)

17. A toner cartridge assembly as in claim 16 wherein said adherent layer comprises an adhesive material.

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(currently amended)

18. A toner cartridge assembly as in claim 16 wherein said adherent layer comprises a tape material ~~whereby~~ wherein said tape material includes adhesive on two opposite surfaces.

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(original)

19. A toner cartridge assembly as in claim 18 wherein said tape material includes a carrier in between two layers of glue or adhesive.

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(original)

20. A toner cartridge assembly as in claim 16 wherein said adherent layer comprises a glue material.

(currently amended)

5 21. A toner cartridge assembly as in claim 16 wherein said ~~at least one~~ kiss-cut release liner is cut with a precision cut that cuts fully through said ~~a~~ release liner layer but not fully through said seal assembly.

(currently amended)

10 22. A toner cartridge assembly as in claim 16 ~~whereby~~ wherein said pull-strip comprises a strip of tear-able material which is unitary with said ~~layer of~~ tear-able layer material.

(currently amended)

15 23. A toner cartridge assembly as in claim 16 ~~whereby~~ wherein said pull-strip comprises a tear-guide.

(currently amended)

24. A toner cartridge assembly as in claim 16 wherein a connecting region is formed in the vicinity where said pull-strip connects to said tear-able layer; and

20 ~~whereby~~ wherein a first pre-cut and a second pre-cut are proximately located in said connecting region or adjacent said connecting region, said first and second pre-cuts determining a location of an initial tear of said tear-able layer in said main body portion.

(currently amended)

25. A toner cartridge assembly as in claim 16

wherein said first layer has a first surface and a second surface wherein said first surface of said first layer is adjacent said second surface of said adherent layer, and

30 wherein said kiss-cut release liner is a portion of a first release liner layer; and

wherein said kiss-cut release liner covers said at least one masking region and the remainder of said first release liner layer is discarded so that said tear-able layer can adhere to said first surface of said adherent layer; and

5 wherein a tape layer has a first surface and a second surface, and

~~whereby~~ wherein ~~[[a]]~~ said first surface of said tape layer is located on said ~~[[a]]~~ second surface of said ~~tear-able~~ first layer

and a second release liner layer is attached to said

10 second surface of said ~~[[tear-able]]~~ tape layer to protect said tape layer prior to installing said seal assembly and ~~which~~ wherein said second release liner layer is removed prior to installing said seal assembly.

(currently amended)

15 26. A toner cartridge assembly as in claim 16 ~~whereby~~ wherein said kiss-cut release liner includes a masking portion of said layer of said kiss-cut release liner includes consisting of more than one discrete region on said kiss-cut release liner wherein each said discrete region on said kiss-cut release liner covers said at least one masking region.

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(currently amended)

27. A toner cartridge assembly as in claim 16 ~~whereby~~

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wherein said kiss-cut release liner is a portion of a first release liner; and

wherein said kiss-cut release liner covers said at least one masking region and the remainder of said first release liner is discarded so that said tear-able layer can adhere to  
30 said first surface of said adherent layer; and

wherein said first release liner includes a non-masking portion of said kiss-cut release liner ~~includes~~ consisting of more than one discrete region on said [[kiss-cut]] first release liner wherein each said discrete region on said first release liner covers said at least one non-masking portioin and whereby said non-masking portion of said first release liner is discarded prior to completion of assembly of said seal assembly of said toner cartridge.

(currently amended)

28. A toner cartridge assembly as in claim 16 ~~whereby~~ wherein said tear-able layer is conductive.

(currently amended)

29. A toner cartridge assembly as in claim 16 ~~whereby~~ wherein said pull-strip layer is conductive.

(currently amended)

30. An image forming apparatus;  
~~whereby~~ wherein said image forming apparatus contains a toner storage container, a waste toner hopper, a photoreceptor, a cleaning blade, a fuser section, a photoreceptor charging device and a transfer section;

~~whereby~~ wherein said toner storage container has a storage tank; and

~~whereby~~ wherein said storage tank includes a seal assembly; and  
said seal assembly comprising:

a main body portion, said main body portion including a first layer defining a first opening,

an adherent layer including a second opening in register with said first opening of said first layer, said adherent layer having a first surface and a second surface, said second surface of said adherent layer is adjacent said first layer and said first surface of said adherent layer further including at least one masking region, ~~whereby~~ wherein said at least one masking region is covered by a kiss-cut release liner; and

a tear-able layer wherein said tear-able layer is adhered to said first surface of said adherent layer except where said at least one masking region is covered by said kiss-cut



release liner, thereby said kiss-cut release liner is covered by said tear-able layer; and  
a pull-strip is connected to said tear-able layer.

(currently amended)

5 31. A method of forming a seal assembly for sealing a toner passage in a toner hopper  
used in an image forming apparatus [[by]]

10 wherein the seal assembly includes an adherent layer which includes a first  
adhesive surface and a second adhesive surface and a first release layer which is  
removably adhered to the first adhesive surface of the adherent layer and a second release  
layer which is removably adhered to the second adhesive surface of the adherent layer to  
preserve the adhesive properties of the second adhesive surface of the adherent layer prior  
to installation of the seal assembly; and

~~adhering a release layer to the first surface of an adherent layer,~~

wherein said method comprises the following steps;

15 forming at least one kiss-cut in the first release layer to generate a masking portion  
and a removable non-masking portion and an open central region forming a full cut  
opening through at least the first release layer and the adherent layer,

removing the open central region to unblock the opening through at least the first  
release layer and the adherent layer,

20 removing the removable non-masking portion of the first release layer to generate  
an exposed portion of the first adhesive surface of the adherent layer,

placing a tearing layer over the exposed portion of the first adhesive surface of the  
adherent layer and over the masking portion of the release layer,

25 ~~whereby wherein~~ the masking portion of the first release layer prevents a portion  
of [[a]] the tearing layer from adhering to the adherent layer ;

~~adhering a first layer to a second surface of the adherent layer; and~~

~~whereby wherein~~ there is a pull-strip attached to the seal assembly.

(original)

30 32. A method of forming a seal assembly for sealing a toner passage in a toner hopper  
used in an image forming apparatus comprising the steps of:

providing a main body portion including a first layer defining a first opening, an adherent layer including a second opening in register with the first opening of the first layer, the adherent layer having a first surface and a second surface, the first surface of adherent layer is adjacent the first layer and the second surface of the adherent layer is adjacent a release liner layer;

forming at least one kiss-cut fully through the release liner layer, wherein the kiss-cut separates the release liner layer into at least one masking portion and at least one non-masking portion;

removing the non-masking portion of release liner layer to generate an exposed portion of the adherent layer thereby further providing a non-exposed portion of the adherent layer under the masking portion of the release liner layer;

adhering a layer of tear-able material to the exposed portion of the adherent layer, wherein a pull-strip is attached to the layer of tear-able material.

(currently amended)

33. A method of forming a toner hopper used in an image forming apparatus;

~~whereby~~ wherein the toner hopper includes a reservoir and a feed roller compartment; and

~~whereby~~ wherein the reservoir is used to store powdered toner; and

~~whereby~~ wherein the feed roller compartment includes a roller used to dispense toner; and

~~whereby~~ wherein the toner hopper includes an attach surface that may be used to install a shipping seal assembly between the reservoir and said the feed roller compartment to block toner prior to use of the toner hopper; and

wherein the shipping seal assembly includes an adherent layer which includes a first adhesive surface and a second adhesive surface and a first release layer which is removably adhered to the first adhesive surface of the adherent layer and a second release layer which is removably adhered to the second adhesive surface of the adherent layer to preserve the adhesive properties of the second adhesive surface of the adherent layer prior to installation of the shipping seal assembly; and

said method includes forming ~~[[a]]~~ the shipping seal assembly including the following steps;

~~adhering a release layer to the first surface of an adherent layer,~~

5           forming at least one kiss-cut in the first release layer to generate a masking portion and a removable non-masking portion; and

forming a full cut causing a separation between usable material and waste material to be discarded and thereby forming an opening through at least the first release layer and the adherent layer,

10           removing the waste material to unblock the opening through at least the first release layer and the adherent layer,

removing the removable non-masking portion of the first release layer to generate an exposed portion of the first adhesive surface of the adherent layer,

15           placing a tearing layer over the exposed portion of the first adhesive surface of the adherent layer and over the masking portion of the release layer,

whereby wherein the masking portion of the first release layer prevents a portion of ~~[[a]]~~ the tearing layer from adhering to the adherent layer ;

~~adhering a first layer to a second surface of the adherent layer; and~~

~~whereby wherein~~ there is a pull-strip attached to the shipping seal assembly; and

20           wherein said method includes the step of removing the second release layer and installing the shipping seal assembly on the attach surface of the toner hopper.

(currently amended)

34. A method of forming a toner hopper used in an image forming apparatus;

25           whereby wherein the toner hopper includes a reservoir and a feed roller compartment; and

~~whereby wherein~~ the reservoir is used to store powdered toner; and

~~whereby wherein~~ the feed roller compartment includes a roller used to dispense toner; and

30           whereby wherein the toner hopper includes a place to install a seal assembly between the reservoir and ~~said~~ the feed roller compartment;

said method includes forming ~~[[a]]~~ the seal assembly including the following steps;

5 providing a main body portion including a first layer defining a first opening, an adherent layer including a second opening in register with the first opening of the first layer, the adherent layer having a first surface and a second surface, the first surface of adherent layer is adjacent the first layer and the second surface of the adherent layer is adjacent a release liner layer;

10 forming at least one kiss-cut fully through the release liner layer, wherein the kiss-cut separates the release liner layer into at least one masking portion and at least one non-masking portion;

removing the non-masking portion of release liner layer to generate an exposed portion of the adherent layer thereby further providing a non-exposed portion of the adherent layer under the masking portion of the release liner layer;

15 adhering a layer of tear-able material to the exposed portion of the adherent layer, wherein a pull-strip is attached to the layer of tear-able material.

(currently amended)

35. A method of forming a toner cartridge assembly used in an image forming apparatus;

20 ~~whereby~~ wherein the toner cartridge assembly includes of a toner hopper and a waste toner hopper; and

~~whereby~~ wherein the waste toner hopper includes of a photoreceptor, a cleaning blade, a charging device for electrostatically charging ~~said~~ the photoreceptor and a container to receive waste toner; and

25 ~~whereby~~ wherein the toner hopper includes a reservoir and a feed roller compartment; and

~~whereby~~ wherein the reservoir is used to store powdered toner; and

~~whereby~~ wherein the feed roller compartment has a roller used to dispense toner; and

30 ~~whereby~~ wherein the toner hopper includes an attach surface that may be used to install a shipping seal assembly for sealing the reservoir in the toner hopper to block toner prior to use of the toner cartridge; and

wherein the shipping seal assembly includes an adherent layer which includes a first adhesive surface and a second adhesive surface and a first release layer which is removably adhered to the first adhesive surface of the adherent layer and a second release

layer which is removably adhered to the second adhesive surface of the adherent layer to preserve the adhesive properties of the second adhesive surface of the adherent layer prior to installation of the shipping seal assembly; and

5     ~~whereby wherein~~ said method includes forming a shipping seal assembly including comprising the following steps;

~~adhering a release layer to the first surface of an adherent layer,~~

10     forming at least one kiss-cut in the first release layer to generate a masking portion and a removable non-masking portion; and

forming a full cut causing a separation between usable material and waste material to be discarded and thereby forming an opening through at least the first release layer and the adherent layer,

15     removing the waste material to unblock the opening through at least the first release layer and the adherent layer,

removing the removable non-masking portion of the first release layer to generate an exposed portion of the first adhesive surface of the adherent layer,

20     placing a tearing layer over the exposed portion of the first adhesive surface of the adherent layer and over the masking portion of the release layer,

~~whereby wherein~~ the masking portion of the first release layer prevents a portion of [[a]] the tearing layer from adhering to the adherent layer ;

~~adhering a first layer to a second surface of the adherent layer; and~~

~~whereby wherein~~ there is a pull-strip attached to the shipping seal assembly; and

25     wherein said method includes the step of removing the second release layer and installing the shipping seal assembly on the attach surface on the reservoir of the toner hopper.

(currently amended)

30     36. A method of forming a toner cartridge assembly used in an image forming apparatus; ~~whereby wherein~~ the toner cartridge assembly includes of a toner hopper and a waste

toner hopper; and

~~whereby~~ wherein the waste toner hopper includes of a photoreceptor, a cleaning blade, a charging device for electrostatically charging ~~said~~ the photoreceptor and a container to receive waste toner; and

5 ~~whereby~~ wherein the toner hopper includes a reservoir and a feed roller compartment; and

~~whereby~~ wherein the reservoir is used to store powdered toner; and

~~whereby~~ wherein the feed roller compartment has a roller used to dispense toner; and

~~whereby~~ wherein the toner hopper includes a place to install a seal assembly

10 for sealing the reservoir in the toner hopper; and

~~whereby~~ wherein said method includes forming ~~[[a]]~~ the assembly including the following steps;

15 providing a main body portion including a first layer defining a first opening, an adherent layer including a second opening in register with the first opening of the first layer, the adherent layer having a first surface and a second surface, the first surface of adherent layer is adjacent the first layer and the second surface of the adherent layer is adjacent a release liner layer;

20 forming at least one kiss-cut fully through the release liner layer, wherein the kiss-cut separates the release liner layer into at least one masking portion and at least one non-masking portion;

removing the non-masking portion of release liner layer to generate an exposed portion of the adherent layer thereby further providing a non-exposed portion of the adherent layer under the masking portion of the release liner layer;

25 adhering a layer of tear-able material to the exposed portion of the adherent layer, wherein a pull-strip is attached to the layer of tear-able material.

(currently amended)

37. A method of forming an image forming apparatus;

30 ~~whereby~~ wherein the image forming apparatus contains a toner storage container, a waste toner hopper, a photoreceptor, a cleaning blade, a fuser section, a photoreceptor charging device and a transfer section;

~~whereby~~ wherein the toner storage container has a storage tank; and

~~whereby wherein~~ the storage tank includes an attach surface that may be used to install a shipping seal assembly for sealing a toner passage in the storage container compartment to block toner prior to use of the storage tank; and

5 wherein the shipping seal assembly includes an adherent layer which includes a first adhesive surface and a second adhesive surface and a first release layer which is removably adhered to the first adhesive surface of the adherent layer and a second release layer which is removably adhered to the second adhesive surface of the adherent layer to preserve the adhesive properties of the second adhesive surface of the adherent layer prior to installation of the shipping seal assembly; and

10 ~~whereby wherein~~ said method includes forming the shipping seal assembly including the following steps;

~~adhering a release layer to the first surface of an adherent layer,~~

15 forming at least one kiss-cut in the first release layer to generate a masking portion and a removable non-masking portion; and

20 forming a full cut causing a separation between usable material and waste material to be discarded and thereby forming an opening through at least the first release layer and the adherent layer,

removing the waste material to unblock the opening through at least the first release layer and the adherent layer,

removing the removable non-masking portion of the first release layer to generate an exposed portion of the first adhesive surface of the adherent layer,

25 placing a tearing layer over the exposed portion of the first adhesive surface of the adherent layer and over the masking portion of the release layer,

~~whereby wherein~~ the masking portion of the first release layer prevents a portion of [[a]] the tearing layer from adhering to the adherent layer ;

30 ~~adhering a first layer to a second surface of the adherent layer; and~~

~~whereby wherein~~ there is a pull-strip attached to the shipping seal assembly; and wherein said method includes the step of removing the second release layer and

installing the shipping seal assembly on the attach surface in the storage tank.

(currently amended)

38. A method of forming an image forming apparatus;

5     ~~whereby~~ wherein the image forming apparatus contains a toner storage container, a waste toner hopper, a photoreceptor, a cleaning blade, a fuser section, a photoreceptor charging device and a transfer section;

~~whereby~~ wherein the toner storage container has a storage tank; and

10         ~~whereby~~ wherein the storage tank includes a place to install a seal assembly for sealing a toner passage in the storage container; and

~~whereby~~ wherein said method includes forming the seal assembly including the following steps;

15         providing a main body portion including a first layer defining a first opening, an adherent layer including a second opening in register with the first opening of the first layer, the adherent layer having a first surface and a second surface, the first surface of adherent layer is adjacent the first layer and the second surface of the adherent layer is adjacent a release liner layer;

20         forming at least one kiss-cut fully through the release liner layer, wherein the kiss-cut separates the release liner layer into at least one masking portion and at least one non-masking portion;

removing the non-masking portion of release liner layer to generate an exposed portion of the adherent layer thereby further providing a non-exposed portion of the adherent layer under the masking portion of the release liner layer;

25         adhering a layer of tear-able material to the exposed portion of the adherent layer, wherein a pull-strip is attached to the layer of tear-able material.

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